



## **Seattle Olmsted Legacy Task Force Meeting Minutes May 30, 2018**

### **Olmsted Legacy Task Force Members**

#### **Present:**

Tom Byers (Seattle Board of Park Commissioners) – **Co-chair**  
Doug Luetjen (Friends of Seattle Olmsted Parks) – **Co-chair**  
Andy Mitton (Friends of Seattle Olmsted Parks) – Member  
Jenifer Rees (Friends of Seattle Olmsted Parks) – Member  
Don Harris (Friends of Seattle Olmsted Parks) – Member  
Jennifer Ott (Volunteer Park Trust) – Member  
Ed D'Alessandro (Seattle Youth Soccer Association) – Member  
Eugenia Woo (Historic Seattle) – Member  
Jeremy Wood (Seattle Human Rights Commission) – Member  
Dewey Potter (Park District Oversight Committee) – Member  
Zoe Kasperzyk (Associated Recreation Council) – Member  
Nyah Curcuruto (Teen Representative) – Member  
Aditi Kambuj in Susan McLaughlin's absence (Seattle Department of Transportation) – Member  
Mark Jaeger (Seattle Public Utilities) – Member  
Lyle Bicknell, (Office of Planning and Community Development) – Member  
Danyal Lotfi's (SPR Superintendent's Office) – Facilitator

#### **Excused:**

Mark Jaeger (Seattle Public Utilities) – Member  
Susan McLaughlin (Seattle Department of Transportation) – Member

### **Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff**

Danyal Lotfi, Community Engagement Advisor  
Kathleen Conner, Strategic Advisor

The May Olmsted Legacy Task Force meeting was held at the Superintendent's Office at 100 Dexter Ave N and was called to order at 6:35PM.

Facilitator Danyal Lotfi began by reviewing the documents that were handed out to Task Force members before the start of the meeting:

- April 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes
- The Agenda for May 30<sup>th</sup> Meeting
- List of upcoming Friends of Seattle Olmsted Parks (FSOP) summer walking tours

Facilitator Lotfi informed the Task Force members that the meetings would be recorded in order for him to capture everyone's feedback and comments by reviewing the recording.

When asked about feedback on previous meeting's notes, co-chair Luetjen suggested that Task Force members be given a week to review notes and reach out with any edits they may have. Task Force member Jeremy Wood inquired about the information requested from Robert Stowers at the previous meeting regarding the cost of Olmsted furniture and maintenance of Olmsted parks. Facilitator Lotfi explained that the request for information has been shared with Mr. Stowers and will share that information at the next meeting of the Task Force.

Co-chair Luetjen asked for a round of introductions from all Task Force members present, in order to welcome our new member, Aditi Kambuj, who will be representing Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) while Susan McLaughlin is on maternity leave.

Co-chair Luetjen inquired about the creation of a new "Views Task Force" that Seattle Parks and Recreation Interim Superintendent Christopher Williams had discussed. Kathleen Conner, Strategic Advisor at SPR, explained that there has been some internal and technical work done to advance the creation of the "Views Task Force" and the second phase of planning, which will be the external facing portion, will begin soon. Co-chair Luetjen suggested perhaps it may be helpful to have communication with the Views Task Force, as he believes there may be intersections between the work of the two groups.

Kathleen Conner's presentation on "Olmsted Design Standards and New Factors" was the first item on the agenda. She's currently the co-lead for "Renewing Our Legacy," which is SPR's strategic plan for the next iteration of the Park District Funding, which will occur once every 6 years. She's previously served as the SPR liaison to FSOP for fifteen years and sits on the Advisory Board of the National Association of Olmsted Parks as well.

Kathleen Conner's presentation was centered around regulatory policies, developed after the Olmsted plan for a Seattle parks system was published in early 20th century, and how we may preserve and rehabilitate the Olmsted legacy while complying with the new regulations. She began with a quote about the Olmsteds that may seem relevant to the work of the Task Force members: "The Olmsteds believed in the restorative value of landscape and that parks can bring social improvement by promoting a greater sense of community and providing recreational opportunities, especially in urban environments."

Kathleen Conner proceeded by listing some of the new regulations SPR must consider during development or redevelopment of any parks:

1. Storm water and Drainage
  - a. Requires SPR to have green infrastructure for storm water and drainage; prohibits the City from dumping sewer into Lake Washington
2. Transportation Safety
  - a. Designing sidewalks in and around our parks to make them safer for park users
3. Lighting
  - a. Increased use of efficient lighting options, like LED lights
4. Environmentally Critical Areas (ECAs)
  - a. Such as steep slopes, wetlands
5. Americans with disAbilities Act (ADA)
  - a. Ensuring that our parks are accessible to all regardless of physical disability
6. Historic Landmarks Preservation
  - a. Local, state and federal level regulations, which follow the Secretary of the Interior's standards for historic preservations; Seattle has over 30 landmarks and SPR regularly works with the historic landmarks agency
7. Play Area Standards

- a. Ensuring increased ADA accessibility, which in the case of Volunteer Park's play area redevelopment led to positive unintended outcomes that brought the park closer to the Olmsted vision for "Flow of Movement" in parks

8. Health Codes

- a. Increased water testing regulations for chlorine in wading pools

She explained to the Task Force that SPR has certain departmental policies as well, such as the Tree Policy and the View Policy. These policies serve as guidelines for, for example, where to plant which specific type of tree or identifying official viewpoints that SPR maintains as well as banning the practice of tree cutting for private views.

Co-chair Luetjen inquired about the structure and role of large partnerships SPR has such as the Green Seattle Partnership (GSP); facilitator Danyal Lotfi will inquire and get back to the Task Force with further information.

The 2017 Parks and Open Space Plan and the various Vegetation Management Plans SPR has created are examples of departmental policies Kathleen Conner also referred to. Additionally, SPR has a list of Best Practices which includes:

- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)
- Planning for timely replacement of aging trees
- Choosing the right plants for Seattle's environment
- Long-term sustainable maintenance practices
- Design to meet the design intent and regulatory requirements and public interests
- Race and Social Justice and equitable distribution of resources
- Ongoing and major maintenance best practices
- Appropriate funding sources

Task Force member Jenifer Ott inquired about whether there's an equation that SPR uses to assess whether a maintenance project is worth pursuing or not, and Kathleen Conner responded by saying that while SPR looks at the cost of that specific maintenance project in comparison to the overall maintenance budget, there's no "equation" that SPR uses. She added that every maintenance project that SPR engages in goes through multiple levels of review by landscape architects and project managers among others as well as assessing the project against the Tree Policy or other guidelines SPR has put forward. This process allows SPR to continue to maintain our historic parks with new standards in place, while at the same time respecting the historical context and the design intents of the park.

The Task Force discussed the challenges of maintaining Olmsted parks at the same time as respecting the new regulations and standards put in place by SPR and the City of Seattle. However, based on examples that Kathleen Conner provided, multiple Task Force members commented on the potential opportunities here (as opposed to challenges) for the City to maintain a historical park beautiful but also respect the new standards; in certain cases, the mixture of new standards and consideration for the design intent of the Olmsted firm resulted in creative solutions in our parks.

There was a question regarding the community engagement process for these maintenance projects and Kathleen Conner explained that community input is a part of the review process she described earlier. Similarly, the Olmsted firm also engaged Seattle residents on the park system's design but on a much smaller scale. Community input will be important to the work of this Task Force as "equity" is a basic principle of the Task Force and SPR itself.

There was great interest from some of the Task Force members about the Task Force drafting a set of recommendations on how SPR could more strongly consider the historical context of Olmsted (and other historical) parks when engaging in maintenance projects. Task Force member Jenifer Ott asked if there are ways to create standards for parks maintenance (such as consideration of historical context of a park) besides creating a legislation and signing it into law. Kathleen Conner explained that another avenue that SPR uses is the creation of departmental guidelines, which function as standards for the work of SPR staff.

Task Force member Donald Harris raised an issue that he sees as important in preservation of our Olmsted parks: he's concerned that while landscape architects and designers at SPR are well aware of the historical nature of some of our parks and their furniture, the grounds keeping and maintenance staff on the front lines are not as aware or do not prioritize the historical context of these parks.

After Kathleen Conner's presentation, the Task Force heard a presentation from Aditi Kambuj, who's representing the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) in Susan McLaughlin's absence, on SDOT's projects and where they intersect with SPR's work, especially in and around Olmsted parks and boulevards.

SDOT's work intersects with SPR in three different ways:

1. Increasing access to parks
2. Thinking of right of way as open space and recreation opportunities
3. Improving SDOT's design standards for greener streets

Aditi Kambuj explained SDOT's Greenways Program, which works to increase green mobility and active transportation as well as improving safe walking and cycling connections for all ages and abilities to various open spaces in Seattle. This includes creating better sidewalks, adding bike lanes, and managing traffic speed and safety, using various traffic data SDOT has been able to collect about activity on and around our roadways. During this work, SDOT engages with the community impacted by the project and seeks their input, in case they have specific identity elements they'd like to see in the final product.

In her experience working with the community, Aditi Kambuj has found that one of the most important needs residents have is safe routes to schools for their children, who are some of the most vulnerable members of our community. They also indicated more open space as a priority; they'd like to see more green connections to parks and open spaces in their neighborhood. This is why SDOT has recently started working with SPR on their Greenways Initiative, which provides funding for capital improvement projects between neighborhood greenways and parks and supports community events along those connections.

An example of collaboration on a Greenways Initiative project is the Interlaken Park Path and Stair Upgrade, which is currently in progress. The design for this project was done in 2017 and it is now under construction. This project includes new stair and ramp connection between Interlaken Boulevard and Boyer Ave E and features elements requested by the community including bike tunnel, guard rails and a switchback that connects to the designated cross walk to replace the existing trail and stairs.

SDOT is working to make our greenways greener than they currently are, and that includes traffic circles as a prime example, for which they work with DIRT (Duwamish Infrastructure Restoration Training) Corps on. Promoting education on maintenance and landscaping, in partnership with SPR, to the community has helped improve the conditions of some traffic circles that are not as well taken care of as others. SDOT also works with SPU on their Trees for Neighborhoods program so that residents can request a free tree in their neighborhood as well as making residential streets without sidewalks safe and more comfortable for pedestrians (30 blocks completed over 2016-2017 period).

In drafting their Street Concept Plans, SDOT creates preliminary plans for the sidewalks, street signs and other elements as well as using design elements to maintain or create a character and identity for the roadway. The University Street project at the intersection of University, Union and Boylston Ave is an example of this. The project created a new public space and gateway to the future neighborhood greenway at the intersection of those three streets and relocated street space on 9<sup>th</sup> Ave between Seneca and University to expand pedestrian realm along Freeway park frontage. The interim project, which cost about \$60,000 and took only 1 week to construct, received 97% support at final public meeting with over 300 people in attendance and made this project the first pavement to park project in Seattle. After construction of the interim project, there was large interest from community for activation and they were able to secure grants and lead the work on activating the new public space. While these projects are initially temporary (1-2 years), it was one of the more successful examples and the developer who will build on the adjacent property has agreed to take on maintenance of the open space. The construction for making this project permanent is underway and it's anticipated to be completed in 2018.

Aditi also presented on the new Seattle Streets Illustrated webpage on the SDOT website, which illustrates various different categories for street design and it's available to the public to review and learn from. SDOT is currently working to assess additional special street concept plans to see what has worked and what hasn't. This will not only result in greener streets, but also better access and increased open spaces in different neighborhoods.

Co-chair Tom Byers re-emphasized his interest in using the City's 2:1 Tree Policy as an opportunity to make roadways such as Aurora greener and more pedestrian friendly. Task Force member Lyle Bicknell raised the issue of public transit cable lines that are needed for some streets and the complications it often creates in designing greenways. Aditi Kambuj is hopeful that with improving battery technology, King County Metro will soon move toward fully battery-fueled electric buses, which will help alleviate this issue. Task Force member Donald Harris added that it's very important for SPR, who is the expert in maintaining landscaping, and SDOT, who is better at maintaining hardscape, to work together on greenways and used the Boulevard Agreement of 1984 between SDOT and SPR as an example. There was a question about whether the Boulevard Agreement is still in place; facilitator Danyal Lotfi will follow up on this issue with the Task Force. Task Force member Andy Mitton added that this type of collaboration between SPR and SDOT could help educate the engineers and SDOT street designers on the historical context of some of our greenways and how to best preserve the historical identity of these streets.

At 8:00 PM, per the meeting agenda, the Task Force provided time for public comment. Evan Philip, a community volunteer working with Friends of Coleman Park as well as a forest steward with the Green Seattle Partnership, was the only member of the public in attendance. He was mostly there to listen to the Task Force's conversation and share his appreciation for their work but also wanted to ask the Task Force to consider incorporating the consideration for historical context of parks when maintaining and executing projects at Olmsted parks.

Lastly, facilitator Danyal Lotfi and Task Force member Donald Harris presented on the information they had gathered on the Olmsted legacy in Louisville, Kentucky. It is important for the Task Force to learn what other jurisdictions around the country with an Olmsted legacy are doing to preserve and rehabilitate their historic parks and how we can use their model, or aspects of it, in determining the future of Olmsted parks in Seattle. In Louisville, the Olmsted Parks Conservancy's mission is to restore, enhance and forever protect Louisville's Olmsted-designed parks and parkways, connecting nature and neighborhood while strengthening the community's well-being. There are 18 Olmsted parks and 6 parkways (15 miles) in

Louisville, which is 19% of all overall landmass of Boston. The Conservancy consults with the City of Boston on Olmsted-related projects. They engage with the public on education and organizing volunteers for projects, as well as fundraising for Olmsted parks maintenance projects, the cost of which they split with the City of Boston. The Conservancy is active on its own as well in various ways, such as fighting invasive species and maintaining trails (though this does not include trash pickup). The Olmsted Parks Conservancy is on a 4 year funding cycle, where they raise funds for the each 4-year plan, implement those projects and spend the funds and repeat the process for the next 4-year plan. One of the important milestones for the Conservancy was the 1994 Master Plan they published, laying out the overall condition of Olmsted parks in Louisville, identifying 3 priority projects for the Conservancy and City to work on and other steps needed to be taken to rehabilitate the Olmsted parks and parkways. In terms of equitable outreach and outcomes, Louisville's representative informed us that the Conservancy helps the City of Boston by conducting community meetings to inform the neighbors about upcoming projects in their area. Additionally, most Olmsted parks in Louisville are located in urban environments, meaning they often serve more in need neighborhoods anyways. Lastly, these are a few important matters Louisville's representative would like the Seattle Olmsted Legacy Task Force to consider:

- Lack of proper education among the public about responsibilities of the Conservancy as opposed to the City has caused challenges in who the public believes should be held accountable when there's a gap in service
- Making Environmental Protection a part of the Task Force's mission and final recommendations
- Whether creating a new fundraising arm for Olmsted parks is an appropriate option for Seattle given the current philanthropy landscape involved in upkeep of our City's parks

Task Force member Jennifer Ott explained that in previous years, FSOP has worked with several "Friends of..." neighborhood groups on fundraising efforts, though with mixed results based on the group and their location/level of activity. She believes that setting up a "Trust" could still serve as a potentially good model for Seattle and she recommends that the Task Force consider this. Co-chair Luetjen suggested that, beyond other jurisdictions in the country, it may be useful to hear from local groups like the Volunteer Park Trust about what they do to help preserve this historic park and how they do this work. Facilitator Danyal Lotfi will reach out to this (and other local) groups to seek their input.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.